

Connecticut General Assembly
Testimony Before the Committee on Public Health
In Support of SB 126
An Act Concerning Children's Exposure to Chemicals
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My name is Teresa Eickel and I want to thank the Committee on Public Health for the opportunity to submit this testimony. As the Executive Director of the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network, represent hundreds of religious communities in Connecticut that see our treatment of the planet and its inhabitants as a deeply moral, spiritual, and ethical issue. We wish to express our deep concern at the appalling amount of toxic chemicals that children are exposed to. Every faith tradition speaks of caring for the most vulnerable – I can't think of many more vulnerable than our children, who are exposed to toxic levels of chemicals every day, in their clothes, their toys, their bath products, etc. Not surprisingly, childhood cancers and developmental disorders are on the rise and children's health experts see a direct link to chemical exposure and health problems for children. Sadly, companies are not required to list many of these toxic chemicals on their ingredient lists, so concerned parents are unable to make an informed decision. This is not right – it is profoundly wrong and it is wrong on a deeply moral level.

I am also a cancer survivor myself, diagnosed with advanced cancer at the age of 37. I did not have a family history of breast cancer and I lived a very healthy lifestyle – I did not drink or smoke, I ate my vegetables, and I exercised every day. In short, when my oncologist looked through my file for the first time, she stared at me and muttered, "I wonder why you are here." And I thought, "You and me both, lady." Three and half years later, I am deeply grateful to be cancer-free, but I'm not finished with this fight.

I'm telling you my story because I believe that environmental toxins play an increasingly large role in the development of cancers, neurological diseases, and developmental disorders. When an adult is diagnosed with cancer, it is truly awful. However, I cannot imagine how bad it is for children – their cancers are often so aggressive and hard to treat, robbing them of futures – ballgames, piano recitals, graduations, weddings, and kids of their own.

We can and we must do better. Our children deserve our very best and that requires us to put their health and futures above the profits of any corporation. I urge you to support SB 126, a bill that will identify harmful chemicals to children and create recommendations to eliminate or replace these chemicals. The Dept of Public Health is fully supportive and there is no cost to the state. I urge you to support this bill and protect our children, because everybody deserves a future.